

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PORT L 00289 01 OF 02 251540Z  
ACTION AF-08

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H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6562  
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE  
AMEMBASSY VICTORIA  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PORT LOUIS 0289

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR PINT MP  
SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - MARCH 25

REF: PORT LOUIS 0258

SUMMARY: PORT LOUIS 286 PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF THIS CABLE.  
END SUMMARY.

1. THE LABOR PARTY AND THE MAURITIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PMSD) LAUNCHED THEIR JOINT CAMPAIGN FOR THE APRIL 24 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AT RALLIES HELD IN PORT LOUIS AND BEAU BASSIN ON MARCH 23, EACH ATTENDED BY A THOUSAND TO FIFTEEN HUNDRED PERSONS. FINANCE MINISTER RINGADOO FOR LABOR AND GAETAN DUVAL FOR THE PMSD EXHORTED THE VOTERS TO SUPPORT THE COALITION IN ORDER TO KEEP THE "COMMUNISTS" OUT OF POWER. RINGADOO WARNED OF THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF A MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM) VICTORY AND RIDICULED  
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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PORT L 00289 01 OF 02 251540Z

THE PERFORMANCE OF THE MMM " SCHOOLBOYS" IN THE ASSEMBLY. RINGADOO SAID THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WILL LAST FIVE YEARS, FOR IT HAS THE STRONG SUPPORT OF A CLEAR MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE. DUVAL SAID THE VOTERS MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN THE COALITION PARTIES, WHICH THOUGH THEY DIFFER IDEOLOGICALLY ARE BOTH DEMOCRATIC, AND THE MMM, " WHICH WANTS TO RUN THE COUNTRY ACCORDING TO MOSCOW'S INSTRUCTIONS." DUVAL SAID

THESE ELECTIONS WILL GIVE THE VOTERS A CHANCE TO DECIDE WHETHER LABOR AND THE PMSD SHOULD CONTINUE TO "MAKE COMMON CAUSE AGAINST THE MMM TO SAVE THE COUNTRY FROM COMMUNISM."

2. IN A PRESS INTERVIEW DUVAL VOICED THE EXPECTATION THAT A LABOR-PMSD VICTORY IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WILL "CONSECRATE" A PERMANENT ALLIANCE BETWEEN THESE TWO PARTIES, WHICH CAN THEN WORK TO DEVELOP THE COUNTRY "WITHOUT MARXISM." IN HIS OPINION THE LABOR PARTY IS WISE TO CHOOSE UNKNOWN YOUNG CANDIDATES FOR THESE ELECTIONS, AS THEY LEARNED IN DECEMBER THAT LABOR VOTERS ARE TIRED OF THE "OLD WAR HORSES." HE ALSO BELIEVES THAT HINDU VOTERS HAVE LOST THEIR ANTIPATHY FOR THE PMSD, AND CLAIMED HE HAD HIMSELF RECEIVED 2,800 LABOR "SYMPATHY" VOTES IN HIS DISTRICT IN DECEMBER.

3. THE MMM'S LE MILITANT HAS LABELLED AS "BLACKMAIL" CERTAIN OTHER STATEMENTS BY PMSD LEADER DUVAL AND LABOR PARTY STALWART BOOLELL ABOUT THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. IN A PRESS INTERVIEW DUVAL SAID THESE ELECTIONS ARE THE "LAST CHANCE" FOR MAURITIANS, FOR IF THE MMM WINS, A CRISIS WILL BE PRECIPITATED WHICH WILL LEAD TO CHAOS AND THE IMPOSITION OF EITHER A DICTATORSHIP OF THE RIGHT OR A DICTATORSHIP OF THE LEFT. BOOLELL'S PAPER CHARGED THAT A MMM VICTORY WOULD JEOPARDIZE THE ECONOMIC FUTURE OF THE COUNTRY AND THEREFORE MUST BE PREVENTED. IN A SPEECH BOOLELL HIMSELF ACCUSED THE MMM OF HAVING MANIPULATED THE WORKERS IN ITS TRADE UNIONS TO CREATE THE CRISES IN THE PORT AND IN THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT INDUSTRY IN ORDER TO CAUSE DIFFICULTIES FOR THE GOVERNMENT.  
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PAGE 03 PORT L 00289 01 OF 02 251540Z

4. JUGNAUTH AND BERENGER, LEADERS OF THE MMM, HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE ON MARCH 24 TO DENOUNCE DUVAL'S WARNING. JUGNAUTH SAID IF THE MMM WINS THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS THERE WON'T BE A DICTATORSHIP OF THE LEFT, SO DUVAL MUST BE THREATENING TO INSTALL A DICTATORSHIP OF THE RIGHT. HE ACCUSED DUVAL OF TRYING TO "POLITICIZE" THE MUNICIPALS AND REDICULED THE IDEA THAT THE ELECTORAL RESULTS COULD HAVE ANY EFFECT ON THE ECONOMIC FUTURE OF THE COUNTRY. BERENGER CALLED ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO DISASSOCIATE ITSELF FROM DUVAL'S REMARKS, WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS VERY DANGEROUS FOR THE COUNTRY. ACCORDING TO BERENGER, THE JOINT CAMPAIGN OF LABOR AND THE PMSD HAS "TURNED A PAGE IN THE HISTORY OF MAURITIUS," FOR THERE IS NO LONGER ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES, WHICH TOGETHER REPRESENT THE EXTREME RIGHT. IT WAS SHAMEFUL, HE SAID, TO SEE RINGADOO ON THE SAME PLATFORM WITH DUVAL SHOUTING HYSTERICAL ANTI-COMMUNIST SLOGANS. BERENGER PREDICTED A WIN BY THE MMM, WHICH HE TERMED "THE PARTY OF THE FUTURE."

5. (COMMENT: IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE MMM IS CONCERNED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S CAMPAIGN THEME TO THE EFFECT THAT AN ELECTORAL VICTORY BY THE MMM WILL HURT THE ECONOMIC FUTURE OF THE COUNTRY. NOT ONLY HAS THE GOVERNMENT BLAMED SOME OF THE COUNTRY'S RECENT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS DIRECTLY ON THE MMM-- WHICH CONTROLS THE DOCK AND TRANSPORT INDUSTRY UNIONS-- BUT IT HAS ALSO ARGUED THAT THE STRONG SHOWING OF THE MMM IN THE DECEMBER PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS HAS HAD AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN INVESTORS, WHICH IS DOUBTLESS TRUE. TO COUNTER THIS THE THE MMM IS PLAYING ITSELF UP AS THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE, HOPING TO ATTRACT UNDECIDED VOTERS TO ITS BANDWAGON. END COMMENT.)

6. THE NATION (PRO-LABOR) SAYS THE LABOR-PMSD COALITION WILL WIN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS HANDILY, IF THEIR SUPPORTERS VOTE WITH DISCIPLINE, FOR TOGETHER THE TWO PARTIES WON A  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 PORT L 00289 01 OF 02 251540Z

MAJORITY OF THE VOTES IN THE DECEMBER PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN ALL URBAN WARDS EXCEPT ONE. (THAT IS A BIG "IF", OF COURSE.)

7. THE COALITION LIST IN SOME WARDS CONTAINS BOTH LABOR AND PMSD CANDIDATES, WITH THE PARTY LABEL OF THE LARGER CONTINGENT BEING APPLIED TO ALL. IN EXPLAINING THIS ARRANGEMENT TO THE AMBASSADOR, PMSD LEADER DUVAL ONLY HALF JOKINGLY SAID THE IDEA WAS TO KEEP LABOR AND PMSD VOTERS "CONFUSED" AS TO EXACTLY WHOM THEY WERE VOTING FOR SO THAT THEY WOULDN'T VOTE ONLY FOR CANDIDATES OF THEIR OWN PARTY. DUVAL SAID THE FAILURE OF THE COALITION TO PRESENT A FULL SLATE OF CANDIDATES IN THREE DISTRICTS WAS DUE TO LABOR PARTY "DISORGANIZATION." IN HIS CUREPIPE WARD THE TWO LABOR CANDIDATES WHO WERE SUPPOSED TO REGISTER SHOWED UP TEN MINUTES BEFORE THE REGISTRATION OFFICE CLOSED WITH FORMS THAT WERE INACCURATELY FILLED OUT AND THEREFORE UNACCEPTABLE. DUVAL'S SISTER HAD TO PUT HER HUSBAND'S NAME IN AT THE LAST MINUTE AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR ONE OF THE TARDY LABOR PEOPLE.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 PORT L 00289 02 OF 02 251408Z

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6563

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PORT LOUIS 0289

8. ON MARCH 20 AN ASSEMBLY OF THE MMM ELECTED 15 OF THE 35 MEMBERS OF THE PARTY'S NEW CENTRAL COMMITTEE. AN ADDITIONAL TWENTY MEMBERS WILL BE ELECTED BY MILITANTS IN THE 20 VOTING DISTRICTS OF THE COUNTRY. PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL BERENGER, VICE PRESIDENT BHAYAT AND PRESIDENT JUGNAUTH LED THE LIST OF THOSE ELECTED, BUT TWO LEADING "MODERATE" PARTY FIGURES AND EX-MEMBERS OF THE POLITBURO, DE L'ESTRAC AND MRS. CZIFFRA, FAILED TO BE ELECTED. IN THEIR PLACE TWO LEADING "LEFTISTS", JACK BIZLALL, A LABOR LEADER, AND DEPUTY SURESH MOORBA, WERE CHOSEN. THOUGH THOSE DEFEATED CAN STILL WIN SEATS FROM ON OF TH 20 DISTRICTS, THE RESULTS ARE BING INTERPRETED AS A SHIFT TO THE LEFT IN THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. SEVERAL OTHER KEY PARTY LEADERS, INCLUDING VICE PRESIDENT JADDOO, LE MILITANT EDITOR SELVON, AND LABOR LEADER RAMSEWAK FAILED TO WIN SEATS. AT THE SAME TIME "RADICALS" SUCH AS FORMER PRESIDENT SHEILA BAPPPOO AND LE MILITANT COLUMIST HERVE MASSON WERE ELECTED.

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PAGE 02 PORT L 00289 02 OF 02 251408Z

9. AT THE THIRD ASSEMBLY SESSION ON MARCH 22, THE GOVERNMENT COALITION TOOK ADVANTAGE OF TIS EXPERIENCE AND OUT-TALKED AS WELL AS OUT-VOTED THE OPPOSITION MMM. TWO NON-CONTROVERSIAL BILLS WERE PASSED EASILY, AS WELL AS A 260 MILLION RUPEE BUDGETARY SUPPLEMENT, WHICH WAS ADOPTED AFTER ONLY TWO HOURS OF DEBATE. IN THEIR ONLY ATTEMPT TO DEFEAT A BUDGET ITEM -- ONE WHICH PROVIDES PENSIONS FOR RETIRED PARLIAMENTARIANS -- THE MMM WAS ON THE SHORT END OF A 35 TO 33 VOTE. SEVERAL PAPERS REMARKED ON THE NAIVETE, LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, AND GENERAL INEPTITUDE OF SOME MMM DEPUTIES IN THIS DEBATE. THE GOVERN-

MENT TOOK ITS REVENGE AGAINST THE OPPOSITION BY NAMING ITS OWN SELECTION OF DEPUTIES TO ATTEND CONFERENCE OF COMMON-WEALTH, AFRICAN AND FRENCH-SPEAKING PARLIAMENTARIANS; THREE WEEKS EARLIER, WHEN THE MMM ENJOYED A TEMPORARY MAJORITY OWING TO THE ABSENCE OF SOME LABOR MEMBERS, THE MMM HAD TRIED TO NAME ALL-MMM SLATES FOR SIMILAR MISSIONS ABROAD. BUT THE GOVERNMENT DIDN'T SHINE ENTIRELY EITHER, AS MINISTERS GAVE EVASIVE ANSWERS TO A NUMBER OF POINTED QUESTIONS BY THE OPPOSITION.

10 SHADOW MMM FOREIGN MINISTER JEAN-CLAUDE DE L'ESTRAC MADE A STRONG CRITIQUE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN POLICY, WHICH HE TERMED "HOLLOW", IN THE ASSEMBLY ON MARCH 22. HIS TWO PRINCIPAL POINTS OF ATTACK WERE OVER RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA AND COMMERCIAL DEPENDENCE ON THAT COUNTRY, AND THE "FAILURE" OF THE GOVERNMENT TO LAUNCH AN OFFENSIVE TO TAKE BACK DIEGO GARCIA FROM THE BRITISH. (ON THE LATTER POINT, SEE PORT LOUIS 280.)

11. THE RESULTS IN THE INDIAN ELECTIONS HAVE STUNNED THE LEADERS OF THE MAURITIAN LABOR PARTY, WHICH HAS ALWAYS CONSIDERED ITSELF CLOSE TO MRS. GANDHI AND THE INDIAN CONGRESS PARTY. SEVERAL PARTY LEADERS SUCH AS BOOLELL AND RINGADOO EXPRESSED THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT IN RATHER STRONG LANGUAGE, BUT PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM WAS MORE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PORT L 00289 02 OF 02 251408Z

RESTRAINED. HE IS PROBABLY MORE CONCERNED THAN THE OTHERS ABOUT ESTABLISHING CLOSE RELATIONS WITH MRS. GANDHI'S SUCCESSORS. THE NATION NOTED THAT OF THE TEN LEADING INDIAN POLITICIANS WHO HAVE VISITED MAURITIUS IN RECENT YEARS, NINE WENT DOWN TO DEFEAT, THE EXCEPTION BEING HEALTH MINISTER KARAN SINGH.  
KEELEY

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